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That which is good for the working class is eternally patriotic - James Connolly

## HOW FEATHERY BOURKE'S HOUSE WAS DEMOLISHED



## INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY



## THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

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# HOW FEATHERY BOURKE'S HOUSE WAS DEMOLISHED

ON Monday November 26th, Portland Lodge, a house at the North Circular Road, Limerick, was demolished in a well planned and efficiently executed operation. The house had been the home of an old recluse, Mikey "Feathery" Bourke, who died in early September. Sean Bourke, the well-known writer and nephew of Feathery, had been renovating the house since the end of September, with the intention of going to live in it early in December.

The Limerick Leader was quickly on the scene of the demolition and, in the lead story, reported the incident in its evening edition of November 26th:

*Sean Bourke's new house at the N.C.R., was knocked down early this morning. Tyre tracks led into the house and around the side. They are similar to the tracks left by large machinery used on building sites, but not a bulldozer. Neighbours heard men working at the house early this morning, but no one seems to know just who it was that wiped out months of work by Mr. Bourke in one swift blow. Whoever was responsible went to work sometime before eight o'clock this morning ... The lock was broken off the gate. The front and side of the house were completely ruined and practically all of the roof is gone.*

On the following day the "mystery" of the demolition deepened as the national press carried reports of the matter. None of the papers gave any clues about the identity of the members of the demolition squad. However, at this stage most of the local reporters had a clear understanding of the people and motives involved in the affair. The nearest any of these reporters came to giving the truth, was when Noel Smith, in a Sunday

Independent article (December 2nd), hinted:

*Mr. Bourke's action in arranging to move in before the legal position was settled was believed to have created friction among some other relatives who felt equally entitled to the lodge. This weekend Mr. Bourke blamed the demolition on "spite" and added: "I felt it was better to move into the lodge and have it occupied rather than having it idle possibly for years while legal matters were being settled".*

"Feathery Bourke left several properties in Limerick, estimated to be worth around £100,000. He also left about eighteen nephews and nieces in various parts of the world, including Sean Bourke and his five brothers. Two more nephews, Thomas O'Grady, of Ballinagarde House, Ballyneety, Co. Limerick, and his brother Desmond O'Grady, a globe-trotting poet, are among this total. Another relative of Feathery Bourke is the well-known local trade unionist, Michael P. (Sean) Finnan, president of the Limerick Branch of the National Engineering and Electrical Trade Union and a former president of the Limerick Council of Trade Unions.

Feathery Bourke did not make a will, which means that his estate will take at least five years to be probated. After his death, Portland Lodge remained unoccupied. Sean Bourke was the only nephew available to occupy the well-built and apparently unwanted house. Thomas O'Grady, one of the biggest pig-breeders in Co. Limerick, has a fine country house, and Michael Finnan lives in a Corporation house at Ballynanty.

After his uncle's death Sean Bourke made no attempt to act secretly. In a full page Limerick Leader interview, complete with photographs, he publicly announced his intention of occupying Portland Lodge until such time as the estate was legally settled. The alternative at this stage would have been to let the house stay empty and fall into decay for the next five or six years while the estate was going through the slow and cumbersome machinery of probate.

Sean Bourke also wrote to his first-cousin, Thomas O'Grady, informing him of his intentions and asking O'Grady if he had any objections. Bourke subsequently met O'Grady on a number of occasions and he offered no objection. Bourke commenced work on the house, helped by a former neighbour from Bengal Terrace. All the contents of the house had to be burned because of their dilapidated state. All doors and windows had to be removed and blow-lamped, sand-papered and made ready for painting. All walls and floors had to be scraped and scrubbed. The entire house had to be re-wired. The walls had to be re-plastered in places. Bourke estimated that at least £500 worth of work, excluding materials, was done at the lodge.

Bourke and his helper continued working on the house right through October and November. Like many other people in Limerick, Michael Finnan and Thomas O'Grady were well aware that this work was being carried out. The last work at the lodge was completed on Sunday, November 25th. Bourke and his mate finished work for the day at about 5.00 p.m. and returned to Limerick, securing the front gate with a lock and chain before they left.

But meanwhile, other forces were gathering with thoughts of demolition rather than re-building on their minds. Finnan and O'Grady met and laid their plans carefully. Two evenings before the demolition swoop, O'Grady called to the National Hotel and insisted on buying Bourke a pint of porter. Bourke, who was later to describe this drink as "the kiss of Judas", had no way of knowing it then but the

reason for O'Grady's visit was to plot his movements to ascertain if he had yet moved into the lodge. Having successfully reconnoitred his cousin's daily routine, O'Grady reported to Finnan and preparations for the final act were made.

Finnan, the iron-moulder and O'Grady, the pig-breeder, had combined their disparate talents in a joint effort to dislodge Bourke. Monday morning, November 26th, had barely dawned when the time had come for the new demolition team's big push. Supported by a mechanical digger, Finnan and O'Grady went into action. Soon the sedate North Circular Road reverberated to the sound of crashing slates and crunching brickwork. As the mechanical shovel hammered home the spine of the roof quickly cracked and before long the front and side walls came tumbling down. Their filial mission accomplished, Finnan and O'Grady unobtrusively slipped into the dim early morning light.

Finnan's local knowledge and influence had provided a comprehensive back-up service. All three public utilities, electricity, gas and water, were somehow persuaded to be present for the demolition at the extraordinary early hour of eight o'clock in the morning. All three of these services were functioning normally at six o'clock the evening before (Sunday). It is difficult enough to get any of these public services to be obliging and prompt at any time. The fact that all three were persuaded to be at the same house, at exactly the same time, and before normal working hours at that, constitutes something of a record and speaks volumes for the influence of Finnan.

Michael Finnan has earned something of a local reputation and much praise in the Limerick press for his trade union "moderation". He has consistently supported a "law and order" position and the right of the elected government of the day to enforce the law as it stands. It is, however, difficult to see - anything brotherly or moderate in his part in the demolition job.

As he arose in the expectation of another day's work, Sean Bourke was blissfully unaware of the changed situation. With his helper he returned to the North Circular Road at about 10.00 a.m. on Monday morning to be confronted with the heap of rubble. Bourke went back to town and immediately telephoned Thomas O'Grady at Ballyneety. Without any hesitation, O'Grady admitted that he and Finnan had made the decision to render the house uninhabitable and had joined forces in carrying out this decision. O'Grady also stated that he had hired the machinery to perform the demolition job. He gave as the reason for his action the fact that he did not want Sean Bourke to live in the house.

By any legal or moral standard, the action of Finnan and O'Grady in demolishing the house was an act of wilful, malicious damage. They would have required the written consent of all the eighteen nephews and nieces before they were entitled to knock down the lodge - and even then, since the estate is subject to probate, it is doubtful if they would have been so entitled. They have destroyed a perfectly good and sound house - and deprived the bourgeois belt at the North Circular Road of the colourful presence of Sean Bourke.

It is obvious from this incident that old Feathery Bourke is still very much alive and well and living on in the marrow of some of his relatives in Limerick. The first round in the succession stakes has clearly gone to Finnan and O'Grady. But Sean Bourke has proved to be a resourceful character on more than one occasion - and a mobile home would look well among the ruined lodge and the lonely trees on the three-acres of land at the North Circular Road.

DON'T LIVE IN IT . . . WE'LL LEVEL IT



## SEAN BOURKE REPLIES TO HELEN BUCKLEY . . .

D 08894

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Portland Lodge  
North Circular Rd.,  
Limerick

Nov. 26th 1973.

Dear Sir,

On Friday Nov. 2nd an article concerning myself, and entitled, "S. Bourke Esq., is pleased to join their Lordships", was published in the Limerick Leader. On the following Monday morning, Nov. 5th, I visited the offices of the Limerick Leader and handed in a written complaint for publication. This is the letter I wrote:

The Editor,  
Limerick Leader,  
O'Connell Street,  
Limerick.

Sir,  
With regard to Miss Helen Buckley's article in last week's "Limerick Leader" headed, "S. Bourke Esq., is pleased to join their Lordships", I shall endeavour to use moderate language, but it will not be easy.

I am a wide and enthusiastic reader of

newspapers and I can assure you that this article by Miss Buckley is the most illiterate and the most scurrilous I have read in any newspaper, national or local, for many a long year. That you, Mr. Editor, should have allowed it to happen displays a grave error of judgment and an abandonment of your responsibilities as Editor of an important and widely read newspaper.

Even in Wormwood Scrubs Prison we had higher standards than this. There I was editor of the prison magazine, "New Horizon", and if a fellow-prisoner had submitted Miss Buckley's article for publication I would have thrown it back at him on the grounds of its illiteracy and vulgarity. Miss Buckley's standard of literacy is such that I feel she would be much more suitably employed with the "Beano" or "Dandy".

This lady was of course trying to write a very "clever" column, but all she achieved was to make herself look cheap and foolish. One is tempted to remind her that brevity is the soul of wit but this would be superfluous since any connection between Miss Buckley and WIT is purely accidental and such advice would probably go over her head.

Miss Buckley keeps harping on about the "danger" of my becoming "respectable". If this lady's so called "writing" is indicative of

"respectability", then I certainly do not want to be respectable.

Anyone reading Miss Buckley's column during the past couple of years could not fail to realise that she is afflicted with certain preoccupations and hang-ups - but I think she has no right to take advantage of her position with the "Limerick Leader" to impose these hang-ups on the rest of us.

This, I know, is closing the stable door after the horse has bolted, but I can assure you, Mr. Editor, that Miss Buckley will never interview me again.

Yours faithfully,  
Seán Bourke.

This letter was suppressed by the Limerick Leader. Does this mean that the daughter of a newspaper proprietor has a licence to write whatever she likes whilst enjoying complete immunity from criticism? If it does, then it is surely a monstrous abuse of her position as a journalist and a very sad reflection on a profession which likes to boast of its long and noble traditions of truth and justice.

Miss Buckley is, in my view, a phoney, and I write this letter to warn your readers against being taken in by her devious tactics.

Yours faithfully,  
Seán Bourke.

SOME HIDDEN ASPECTS OF

# THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE:

During an exchange of letters in the Limerick Leader a few months ago on the issue of whether Ireland is one or two nations, a correspondent named Richard Lynch, Noig, Pallaskerry, Co. Limerick, weighed in with two letters in defence of the one-nation position. Mr. Lynch, offered an unusual combination of credentials in support of his views: he claimed to be a Protestant, who had been "brought up in the socialist school".

Despite this claim, Mr. Lynch's interpretation of history follows the familiar Catholic national pattern. He describes how Partition came about in his second letter published on September 15th:

*Partition was imposed ... in 1921 ... This Irish people had destroyed the Home Rule party; they had consigned it to the rubbish heap of history. They had voted for a united Ireland independent from Britain, as demanded by Sinn Féin. The latter had secured 73 out of 105 seats in the election of December 1918. In 1920 they secured a 90 per cent poll.*

All this sounds very impressive if you take it on its surface value. But if you measure the Sinn Féin vote in the 1918 election you find that the party polled less than a third of the registered votes. With this comparatively small vote Sinn Féin received almost three-quarters of the seats. If it had become the government of all Ireland it would have been a minority government. It only represented the majority in Catholic Ireland, and the size of its majority in Catholic Ireland has been greatly exaggerated by propagandists like Richard Lynch.

It is true that the Nationalist Party was "consigned to the rubbish heap of history". But the extent of the Sinn Féin victory was due to the fact that the election was fought under the British system of single seat constituencies, and not under proportional representation. The British system is designed to facilitate effective government by giving large Parliamentary majorities on the basis of relatively small electoral majorities. Proportional representation tends to make parliamentary representation proportionate to the percentage of the vote. Under the single seat system in the 1918 election large Nationalist minorities throughout the South went unrepresented. Under proportional representation Sinn Féin would probably have got closer to a third of the seats than to nearly three-quarters.

There is no doubt, however, about the significance of the election results in Ulster. Sinn Féin gained no support at all in the Protestant community. The Unionist representation in the province was greatly increased, and was almost a two-to-one Unionist majority over Sinn Féin and the Nationalists.

The change from Nationalists to Sinn Féin in 1918 was not as great as Richard Lynch and Sinn Féin writers claim. The basic issue on which the Nationalist Party foundered was the coercion of Ulster. It had been clearly demonstrated that Ulster would not voluntarily come under a Catholic nationalist government, and that it would resist the British government, if it attempted force it in. And

it had become obvious that the British Government, while it was prepared to exert political pressure on the Ulster Unionists, was not prepared to make war on them to force them out of the United Kingdom and under an Irish Catholic nationalist government.

The only alternatives open to the Nationalist Party at this stage were to agree to Partition or to lead a Catholic offensive on Protestant Ulster. The Party did neither. It was not prepared to make war on Ulster and it was not prepared to agree to Partition. Into this breach stepped Sinn Féin and it promised the country that it was prepared to coerce Ulster. Sinn Féin and the Nationalists had similar world, national and social policies. The one fundamental difference between them was the coercion of Ulster.

Richard Lynch then goes on to describe the War of Independence.

*And this was backed up by the armed by the Irish people's armed struggle. For four years (1917 - 21) they prosecuted successfully a guerrilla war against the occupying British forces: against terror, victimisation, wholesale murder, rapine, arson, reprisals and the ultimate horror of the uncontrolled Black and Tans.*

Here, again, Richard Lynch presents an over-simplified and one-sided account of the "four glorious years" of the Irish War of Independence. But a book has recently been published by an Ulster Presbyterian historian in which a different picture of the "glorious years" is presented. The book seems to have escaped the notice of Richard Lynch and most of the other Anti-Partitionists. The publication is *St. Enoch's Congregation 1872 - 1972*. The writer is G.M. Barkley, a professor at the Presbyterian College, who is very much in the Volunteer/United Irishmen/Ulster Liberal tradition.

Unlike Richard Lynch, Barkley does not stand in awe of the "glorious years" after 1917. He treats them in a mundane way and in the process presents some interesting sidelights on "Ireland's Fighting Story". There has been, he says, "been much indiscriminate vilification of Northern Ireland Protestants as a people without humanity". (page 100). Barkley then proceeds to quote from a report to the Presbyterian Assembly of 1921:

*... the campaign of bloodshed and terrorism initiated by Sinn Féin is still being ruthlessly carried out ... and in some districts the Protestant population is being entirely exterminated. In a small congregation in the South of Ireland a leading Presbyterian and his son were kidnapped and subjected to great torture, mental and physical, for three weeks, when they were released on conditions that they should leave the country immediately. They had to leave their home and business without compensation. Another member of the same Church was seized by the Sinn Féiners and had to flee the country to save his life, not being given time to sell his farm or stock. Nine families in that district belonging to the Church of Ireland were wiped out under similar conditions ... A son, who returned from Trinity College ... to comfort his widowed mother, was shot dead on March 26th, and in April her farm was devastated and looted. Such infamous*

*... cold logic was not enough and there was another difficulty: as well as the purists who wanted nothing if they could not get "the whole thing" the Army had been swollen by new recruits who had taken no part in the earlier fighting and joined when hostilities ceased. These "Trucileers" were many of them, young loafers who dreaded a return to normal conditions. They liked to swagger round looking like gunmen, inspiring awe in miserable and apprehension in responsible minds. A shrewd judge of his countrymen, who had played a leading part in the revolutionary movement, remarked after a short holiday in his native place that there were many young men in the country who were determined never to do an honest day's work again. The fighting with the English had been done by a few thousand men, there were now nearly 100,000 in the I.R.A. and the pulse of the armed force was under constant and anxious pressure by those who were bidding for its support.*

*"Kevin O'Higgins" by Terence de Vere White.*

*crimes are being committed daily in Sinn Féin Ireland ...*

From the 1922 Report he quotes:

*We learn with regret that the trend of events in Southern Ireland is leading to the gradual withdrawal of many Protestant families. In one Presbytery the membership has been reduced by 45% in the last seven years, and other Presbyteries have suffered almost as severely.*

And in the North, according to the 1922 Report:

*The presence of numerous gunmen in Belfast of a hostile organisation made the attainment of peace in that city exceedingly difficult. These are well supplied with arms; they move about in civilian attire; their policy is to destroy the Government of Northern Ireland, and they seek to achieve that end by assassination of police officers, bombing of tramcars, and the systematic destruction of property. By their operations during the three months beginning 1st February and ending 1st May 1922 no fewer than 51 Protestants were slain in Belfast, and upwards of 150 Protestants wounded, while thousands of pounds worth of valuable property belonging to Protestants was burned. These crimes have led to violent reactions and cruel reprisals, which are justly condemned.*

The 1923 Report is also quoted:

*Many have been compelled to leave under threat of death. If the present rate of migration continues it can only be a short time until all our Presbyterian Churches in the South of Ireland have disappeared except those in large centres of population, and even there we find already a marked decrease in members. During recent years hundreds of Protestant families have been driven from their home and from their country ...*

According to Barkley:

*The decline in Presbyterian members, largely*

because of terrorism and insecurity, between 1916 and 1922 was:

Athlone Presbytery	a loss of 30%
Connaught Presbytery	36%
Cork Presbytery	45%
Dublin Presbytery	16%
Munster Presbytery	44%

And he comments:

While it is true some Presbyterians left Saorstát Éireann voluntarily, many left because of a very real insecurity and others were burned out. So there is another side to the modern myth of thousands of Protestants simply leaving rather than live in the Irish Free State. According to one member (of the Presbyterian Assembly) examined over 400 cases of murder, torture, burning and ejection (page 106).

These aspects of the War of Independence have received little attention in all the Sinn Féin histories of the period. They were considered to be insignificant details of the "fight for freedom". Another example of the prevailing attitude of the I.R.A. was given during the Dail debates on the Treaty on December 22nd 1921 when Seán Moylan, spokesman for the North Cork I.R.A. confidently threatened:

*If there is a war of extermination waged on us, that war will also exterminate British interests in Ireland; because if they want a war of independence on us, I may not see it finished, but by God, no loyalist in North Cork will see its finish, and it is about time someone told Lloyd George that.*

Moylan used the term "loyalist" instead of Protestant, but there was no mistaking his meaning. The Protestants got the message and those who were not killed or driven out by I.R.A. "flying columns raiding for guns" were soon softened up.

But Richard Lynch shows scant concern for this record, the decline of the Presbyterians, the operation of the Na Temere decree and the creation of a sectarian state in the Irish Republic. Instead he selects a different document from the Presbyterian Church and attempts to use it in support of his one-nation claims. He writes:

*I quote from a document, The policy of the Presbyterian Church to the Gaelic Language, issued 1965:*

*The Presbyterian Church co-operates with the Governments of Northern and Southern Ireland in anything which will preserve the art, culture and literature of the country and which will instil in people a pride and love for their land... The Presbyterian Church in Ireland is a national Church and knows no border in its work, but seeks to serve God in all parts of the land ... because it is Irish it is of its native background.*

Through the use of this quotation Richard Lynch attempts to prove that all Irish Catholics and Protestants share the same national culture. But the quotation proves nothing. If the Presbyterian Church members in Northern Ireland want to have a thirty-two county church structure and a six-county state structure that is their decision. There are various Protestant churches in Northern Ireland, some having a thirty-two county structure. Their religious unity is essentially a political matter. They are all opposed to the religious dogma and organisational structure of the Catholic Church. But that is not the grounds on which their unity is based: it is based on their opposition to the social policy of the Catholic Church.

Richard Lynch does not give the number of Irish-speakers among Northern Presbyterians or even

among Southern Presbyterians. But considering that Presbyterians in the South number only 19,000, or less than 0.7 of the population, this total is unlikely to be very big. He also ignores the fact that in the half-century 1911 - 1961 the Catholic population of Northern Ireland increased by 16% while "others" increased by 13%. In the South the Catholic population decreased by 5%, while "others" decreased by 56%.

Last month the setting up of a power-sharing government composed of Unionist and S.D.L.P. members has dealt the fatal blow to the basic foundation of Catholic Nationalism - the conviction that the State of Northern Ireland had no legitimate right to exist and that any involvement in the administration of the state would be a fundamental betrayal of everything republicanism stood for. And as the belief that an island divided into two nations forms one cultural and unified community is rapidly being discredited, and at a time when the last and most intensive I.R.A. campaign to coerce Northern Ireland is now in its death throes, along comes Richard Lynch, a Southern Protestant "brought up in the socialist school" to proclaim the dogma with greater fervour than ever.

But then, servility to the ruling Catholic nationalist powers in the South has been for so long a condition of survival for tame Protestants like Richard Lynch that it is not surprising that one of the servants has failed to notice that his masters have changed direction.

#### "OUR BOYS" OF THE OLD BRIGADE

THEY say a leopard never changes its spots and this could equally be applied to the recently revamped "Our Boys" magazine published by the Christian Brothers and circulated to thousands of young school-children each month.

Described on the masthead as "Ireland's Number One Magazine Story Book For Boys", the publication, despite its changeover to more modern design and layout, still retains its narrow and vicious method of disseminating nationalist propaganda to young minds.

In Ireland the glorification of nationalistic violence has been cultivated by many of the religious orders, to the cost of many young lives and innocent blood. However, undaunted by the physical results of such blatant indoctrination, the Christian Brothers are still prepared to pander to distorted history, which has wrought much destruction and suffering on the people of this island.

The latest example of their "patriotism" came in a recent issue, when a two-page article, "The Men Who Died Smiling" gave expression to all the religious trappings of extreme Irish nationalism. The scene is set:

*"When asked at the court-martial if they regretted their part in the Rising each of the leaders had given the same answer: they regretted nothing, they said, because they had only done what was right, and so, if they were to choose a second time, they would do the same again".*

Without making any serious attempt to analyse the political motives of the leaders of the Rising, the writer of the "Our Boys" article drew the following conclusion:

*"That was the explanation for the happiness with which each of these noble men went to his death:*

#### Profile,

When, for instance, someone refers to Northern Ireland as Britain's last colony he is betraying his ignorance. Belfast, the cockpit of the Irish tragedy, is a product not of any plantation but of the industrial revolution. But the Dorothy Macardle version of history is hard to eradicate. It is seductively simple. The Six Counties are seen as The Fourth Green Field that was grabbed from its rightful owners; Ireland is like the fair damsel in a Victorian melodrama with Britain cast as the villain. It is a kind of murder in the Green Barn. Such puerile views would be comic but for their obscene consequences. *Con Houlihan*

'how  
to  
die  
smiling'

*they were going to meet their God - and He would be sure to have a welcome for men, who in the words of Padraig MacPiarais, had taken Him at His word".*

*"They had done the right thing and He would keep His promise, for He had said: 'Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice'. They could afford to die smiling".*

The frightening aspect is that this divine imprimatur for violence is directed at the young minds of schoolchildren .. dozens of whom will no doubt be inspired by such images of supreme sacrifice ... and will end up with guns in their hands .. believing it is right ... It is a pity that the line about those who twist the minds of the young is not better known ... especially by the children.

# INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

"How can a person or class be free when its means of life are in the grasp of another? How can the working class be free when the sole chance of existence of its individual members depends upon their ability to make profits for others?"

James Connally.

On November 24th the inaugural public meeting of the recently formed Organisation for Workers' Democracy was held in Dublin. The aims of the new organisation were set out in a circular notice announcing the meeting:

*This Organisation has been formed to create a debate, educate and inform trade unionists particularly and the public generally about the many forms and proposals for Workers' Democracy, Workers' Control and other forms of decision-making by workers in industries, services, and in the economic life generally. Workers' Democracy, in the Organisation's view, is a necessary pre-condition in the development towards a society which economically and socially is geared to serve the community need and to create a real democratic dimension at the place of work that will reflect and be a reflection of a growing feature of a new, more humane and civilised social order. It is also the desire of the Organisation to resist legislation that might seek to impose on trade unions any specific or uniform system or that might limit the freedom of action of trade unions in this field.*

It is a measure of the industrial and political weakness of the Irish working class that the establishment of some type of central body for the study and dissemination of information about industrial democracy has only now taken place.

The lack of industrial development and the small number of industrial workers have been the main reasons for the late start by Irish workers in this area.

When the Labour Party's policy document on workers' democracy was published in 1969, it appeared as if a national debate on the subject was about to commence among left-wing political groups and in the trade union movement. However, in the four years since the release of the document, this debate has failed to materialise. This failure has been due to a combination of reasons. Among these were:

- (i) The sharpening of the Northern Ireland conflict and the upsurge of nationalism in the working class.
- (ii) The success of the Labour Party, in the Coalition Government context, in playing down any further attempts to develop or even discuss its now embarrassing workers' democracy policy.
- (iii) The inability of other left-wing groups to come to terms with the question and to rally any significant section of Irish workers behind them.

Because of this background the Irish working class has lagged behind most of the other European countries in organising a movement for industrial democracy. The increasing interest of employers and their organisations in the subject is one obvious sign that the initiative has already been taken up by them. Frequent articles have appeared in Irish newspapers telling us what a good thing industrial

democracy is and what benefits it can bring. The magazine of Irish capitalism, *Management, Business and Finance*, and others have also taken up the question in their columns.

A few months ago the Irish Productivity Centre placed advertisements in the national press seeking people to fill two new positions being created at the Centre. One post was for an education officer for "the development of labour/management relationships in manufacturing industry". The second vacancy was for a specialist in worker participation at a salary of between £3,800 and £5,100 a year. The specialist would be expected "to manage an on-going programme of worker participation at firm level - work councils, work re-organisation, etc".

As well as this we have the proposals of the European Commission on worker participation. And the joint Fine Gael/Labour statement of intent before this year's general election contained the following pledge: "As an integral part of its economic and industrial relations policy the new Government will introduce worker participation in State enterprise and the election of worker representatives to State Boards".

And recently, Michael O'Leary, Minister for Labour, following up the statement and also responding to the E.E.C. proposals, promised to introduce legislation to enable workers to be elected to the boards of State bodies. It is clear from these moves that the employers and the Government are formulating their own policies on the subject.

To what do we owe this comparatively new-found interest by Irish employers in worker participation? It can be certainly said that this interest has not been caused by a sudden concern by employers for the welfare of their workers. The preservation of the present industrial power structure and the profits flowing from it are clearly the main reasons for the employers' initiative. The employers know that industrial democracy is an inevitable process in the long term and their interest in the subject is thus motivated by their desire to divert the workers' movement into a new management technique to increase production, while at the same time control is retained in their own hands.

In a situation where relatively full employment has existed in most European countries for the last decade or more, the bargaining position of the workers has remained in a consistently strong position. The workers, however, have failed to exploit and consolidate their strong position and have dissipated their energies in pursuit of traditional demands for more wages. Recurring struggles on this front have won regular wage increases but these have been largely eroded by inflation.

The employers have been quicker to realise the potentially powerful position of the workers in this situation and it is this realisation which is responsible for their moves towards worker participation. A number of other considerations also enter the picture. With more and better education for workers the old feudal relationship between master and servant is fast disappearing. And in some of the more industrially developed countries, social

welfare benefits are now so high that traditional fear of unemployment has lost much of its force as a deterrent to workers.

Faced with apathy and a high rate of absenteeism, especially among workers doing repetitive, boring and dirty jobs, employers in these industries see worker participation as a means of increasing production and improving the quality of the work by making the jobs more interesting through the more personal involvement of the workers in the production process. Already we have seen examples of this strategy in Sweden, Denmark and Germany.

The initiative of the E.E.C. Commission, the Irish Government and the employers, therefore, is a calculated response to the increasing demands of workers throughout the world, for greater democracy in the workplace. The demands have usually emerged when employers have attempted to introduce redundancy or to close down factories. A few examples of these demands have been seen in Ireland in recent years when workers have refused to meekly go on the unemployed lists when their factories have closed down. Through the use of work-ins workers have succeeded in retaining their employment under new management and ownership set-ups.

Other examples of workers' initiative have been seen on the Clydeside, in the Lip factory in France and at the AKZO plants in Holland. Much can be learned from these spontaneous, instinctive actions of rank and file workers, and these examples can serve as a useful guide on the road to industrial democracy. Not only have workers acted in a defensive role in these situations but they have also advanced demands insisting on the autonomy of the works' council in its dealing with the employers.

Workers are now faced with the immediate prospect of O'Leary's proposals for worker participation in State bodies. It is yet another sign of the stage of the movement for industrial democracy in Ireland that workers find themselves waiting for these proposals to be announced so that they can react to them. As in the case of the recent discussion document released by AnCO, the industrial training authority, unions and workers' political groups have allowed themselves to be placed in a position where they can only criticise the new policy after it is produced. This has been the traditional role of Irish trade unions and left-wing groups - reacting to rather than creating policies.

The question of industrial democracy cannot be tackled in this way. While this struggle cannot be separated from the struggle for political democracy and socialism, the present stage of the development of capitalism offers a real prospect of an advance through industrial democracy. The change in Irish economic policy from protectionism to free trade, the subsequent operation here of multi-national companies and the E.E.C. entry have brought the country into the mainstream of modern capitalism. The increase in the number of industrial workers, the introduction of new working methods, including productivity deals and four-cycle shifts and signs of a growing class awareness of workers have been among the results brought about by these changes.

# INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

The Irish trade union movement was not prepared for these changes and has responded sluggishly to them. Irish trade unions still continue to be organised in a multiplicity of small national unions, whereas the employers are organised in multi-national and strong national bodies. While the concept of One Big Union no longer seems an attainable, or even desirable, that fact that so many Irish unions are small and under-equipped has prevented them from doing more than operate on a defensive hand-to-mouth basis.

In addition to this fact, many unions are bureaucratic and undemocratic. The impression is frequently given that it is more important to get some of the top officials of some of the bigger unions into the Senate and more officials on the boards of State and semi-State bodies than it is to lead their numbers to a reater share of union and industrial democracy. Faced with this situation, the attitude of many dissatisfied and frustrated trade unionists has not yet expressed itself in a coherent, articulate movement. However, the number of breakaway unions and the growing practice of workers "shopping around" for unions offering a

better service — or the promise of a better service — are symptoms of the present undemocratic and unhealthy state of the trade union movement.

If industrial democracy is to succeed changes must be brought about in the thinking, operation and structure of Irish trade unions. Only when these changes take place will unions educate and agitate for industrial democracy and encourage and support rank-and-file initiative on the factory floor. Only through more democracy and education in the trade unions will progress be made and any workers' democracy movement must have these aims among its main priorities.

The sham of the appointment of Irish Congress of Trade Unions to the boards of State and semi-State companies must also be ended. What these union officials do on these boards, apart from drawing their directors' expenses, has never been explained but it is certain that the continuation of this practice in no way serves the interests of the workers or the community in general. This practice has been successfully nicknamed "industrial democracy by parachute" — an operation whereby these tame trade union officials drop through the skylight of the boardroom into their directors' chairs.

Industrial democracy must begin on the shop floor and must continue throughout all parts of industry including the boardroom. Side by side with this must go a workers' demand for the substantial control of the national economic resources and policies. If the movement for industrial democracy

has not these objectives and fails to develop along these lines then it will become nothing more than a cynical deal between the personnel boys and the "business" trade union officials. And it is the aim of many of the employers to isolate the workers in order to form them into new type of house associations and to try to make mini-capitalists out of them through gimmicky profit-sharing schemes.

It would be foolish to expect anything revolutionary from Michael O'Leary's proposals. O'Leary has developed into a "successful politician" in recent years much in the same way as Tony O'Reilly has developed into a successful businessman. The new proposals are likely to give a few workers the "right" to "participate" without power or control in a few State bodies. Confronted with this prospect the demands of Irish workers should be clearly and unambiguously stated. These should be:

- The right to work
- The right to determine the organisation of their work
- The right to determine their supervisors
- The right to determine the investment and dividend policies of their companies.
- The right to have complete access to company books
- The right to control over national resources and policies

This is what industrial democracy is all about.

FROM

BY THE FIRESIDE  
By J.F. O'Donnell

Blame me not if now and then  
I backward look to other days,  
With something in my eyes like rain,  
That blurs the brightness into haze.  
Then, as the world grew worse and worse,  
Your love grew stronger, nobler, higher;  
Our panting hearts came nigher and nigher  
With one impulsive, secret force.

And little cared we whether morn  
Should come with promise or despair,  
A great strength of soul was born  
And cradled in our daily care  
Your dress was sad, my coat was brown,  
And rotten as the sea-side sand;  
And light my pathway into town.

And I went forward, glad and gay,  
Your sweet laugh nestling near my heart,  
To win our bread and fight our way  
Through crowded office, dock, and mart.  
Much longed I for the evening hours,  
For, home returning, I again  
Should see your dear face at the pane,  
Amid the sweet geranium flowers.

Do you remember Christmas time,  
When I was idle — hope bereft —  
To jangle on a churchyard rhyme  
No coin in our limp purse was left?  
But when the evening came, you spread  
Such festive cheer — such noble wine,  
That I stood doubting in the shine  
Like one by witchcraft visited.

Ah, brave, good wife; mine own, mine own,  
I clasp thee closer to my breast;  
Your sole, sole jewel, love, was gone,  
The nearest courtyard knew the rest.  
God help us! When at night you slept,  
And I, by stealth, discovered all,  
I turned my face unto the wall,  
And, stifling down my sobs, I wept.

For I remembered well the night  
I hung that locket round your neck  
The garden swam in amber light,  
And we stood in one rosy fleck,  
Shot through the damascenes. On your hair  
The warm glow wavered, 'till it dipped  
Down to your shoulders round, and slipped  
Thence in gold wrinkles here and there.

Do we love less that we have trod  
The path of pain with bleeding feet?  
Do we love less that our abode,  
Long years, by rain and storms was beat?  
No, No; when wretched, poor and lone,  
The snows unto our roof-top clung,  
Our poor hearth cricket louder sung,  
Our household altar shone.

Place thy dear hand, sweet wife, in mine,  
And rest thine head upon my arm,  
And turn to me thy face divine,  
That I may catch its tender charm.  
Thick on my brain old memories throng,  
Around my heart your words are wove,  
"If bitter grief but temper love,  
The world can do us little wrong".

FOR THE ATTENTION OF KARL JOHNSTON  
AND JACK BOURKE

*Clients usually expect and get deferential treatment when they visit their advertising agency's office. Arthur Buxton tells of one former art director in Chicago's Earle Ludgin agency who practiced a unique salute to clients. Whenever he met one anywhere in the agency office, he would drop everything and stand on his head.*  
(John McCarthy, "Madison Avenue", Irish Times, 6/11/73).



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# A CHRISTMAS BOX

SKINHEAD SPECIAL



POLICE BRUTALITY

As the Gardai went into action I saw one of them push a Limerick lad against a corrugated iron fence. Seconds later the Garda slapped his face a couple of times. For being cheeky, I was later told. Now, if giving cheek is an offence punishable by being pushed against a fence and getting your face boxed, then I'm not as well up on the law as I thought I was. One wonders if the same Limerick skinhead were to do the same to a Waterford supporter who gave him cheek would he be arrested? I think he would. Yet that's the example being set for him by the law enforcement. Working on the theory that all men are equal, any Limerick skinhead or bootboy who was to assault somebody who gave him cheek would seem to be in order. The garda did not apologise!

(Billy Kelly, reporting on the "Skinhead Special" bus trip to Waterford, Limerick Leader, October 20, 1973).

"This is the most disgraceful exhibition I have ever witnessed", remarked Sen. Ted Russell, while Ald. Pat Kennedy bowed his head in agreement. "Oh, Senator, he said, "it makes my flesh creep ... gone are the days of dignified public representatives ... there are only a few of us left".

Looking down at the Law Agent, Mr. Richard Woulfe, the Mayor got an inspiration. "Shut up the lot of ye", he roared, "before I set the "wolf" on ye ...". A lull followed, and the City Manager was then able to read the Agenda.

"Item one, Your Honour, the Council Christmas Party" said the City Manager.

The Mayor rose to speak. "This year, in view of the increased costs of food and drink, I am putting forward an unusual idea. Why don't we, the members of the City Council, put our heads together and hold a party ourselves ... I suggest the following, Sen. Russell will bring along the buns and bread, Cllr. Feeney will make the tea and Cllr. Kiely will give out the jelly-babies. The turkeys will come from Cllr. Casey and Dinny O'Malley will give us a few jars. Jack Bourke has promised to bring along a few dancing girls from Dublin".

There was immediate applause for the Mayor's speech, but the one dissenting voice was that of Ald. Coughlan. "I will not be a party to people gorging themselves while there are poor people in this city", he said.

"Do you have to be so dogmatic", asked the Mayor.

"Are you calling me a dog?" demanded Ald. Coughlan, "remember who brought you into the Labour Party and put you where you are to-day".

At this stage, Cllr. Earls put up his hand. "By the way", he said meekly, "it was 'flats' I mentioned at Geary's Hotel, not 'rats'".

Two days after the meeting, however, a certain amount of controversy blew up when a report in the Limerick Leader by film critic, John O'Shaughnessy, revealed that after the party the Councillors would attend the showing of a blue film in the City Theatre. This was quickly denied by Cllr. Bourke. "Tis a technicolour film", he said with a smile, "and has many other colours besides blue".

Amid great pomp and much back-slapping the party was held last night but just as the guests were about to tuck in, a power cut plunged the Chamber into darkness. "Communists", shouted Cllr. Tony Bromell. "Its about time we went on strike too", said Cllr. Se. Fielding, as he groped for a brandy bottle in the dark.

As a few other Councillors groped for the dancing girls, Cllr. Mick Kennedy was heard to remark: "In the dark, is it? Bedad, I'm in the dark since I joined the City Council".

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## THE MONTH'S MIND

A "DO" IN THE DARK.

The decision by the Limerick City Council, made at its meeting last week, to hold its special Christmas party in the Courthouse, has been welcomed by the people of the city as a definite and worthy contribution to the cutting of taxpayers' expenses.

"Thank God it wasn't in the Parkway", sighed the Mayor, Ald. Michael Lipper, "as the last "do" cost me over a thousand quid".

"T'was only right that we should have a dinner to honour the great hurling victory", observed Cllr. Mickey Earls.

"Go way orta that", snapped Cllr. Paddy Kiely, "all you did was drink the whiskey".

"Well at least I didn't knock it off from the Mayor's Office", retorted the Labour man.

"Councillors, councillors", pleaded the Mayor, "willyou come to order ... enough of the back-biting and political stabbing .. as Mayor of Limerick it is my intention to have peace this Christmas ... let the Christmas spirit come over ye ...".

"Let's all adjourn to Geary's Hotel", said Cllr. Clean Casey. "I'm dry from plucking turkeys".

"Not on your life", shouted Cllr. Jack Bourke, "I don't want to be ate out of house and home".

"I wouldn't take any a that food", interjected Cllr. Kiely, "them Chinkers id poison you".

"There's no more flats in Geary's Hotel", laughed Cllr. Earls, while Cllr. Bourke jumped to his feet. "Mayor, I demand an apology ... that was a dreadful allegation and it is completely untrue".

"Let's all calm down now ... " said Ald. Steve Coughlan, who had been asleep in the background. "There is a difference of opinion here", he observed.

"He said there were rats in my place", roared Cllr. Bourke at the red-faced Cllr. Earls. "Well now maybe there are", answered Ald. Coughlan, "we get a lot of imported rats in Limerick".

"I protest Mayor", shouted Cllr. Bourke, while Ald. Coughlan continued his defence of Cllr. Earls. "Mickey and myself have been personal friends for many years. He is a gentleman ... there is no harm in him ... he is honest and upright ... and I know it".

"You couldn't bribe me Steve", confided Cllr. Earls. "Will you keep your big mouth shut", roared Ald. Coughlan, while the rest of the members tried to attract the Mayor's attention.